



The Dome of the Rock

Oleg Grabar

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The Dome of the Rock, the beautiful Muslim shrine in the walled Old City of Jerusalem, was fully restored to its original state in the last half-century. Thus, this structure, sited on the third holiest spot on earth for Muslims, is at once a product of the seventh century and almost entirely the work of our own times--a paradox in keeping with the complexities and contradictions of history and religion, architecture and ideology that define this site.

This book tells the story of the Dome of the Rock, from the first fateful decades of its creation--on the esplanade built in the fourth decade B.C.E. for the Second Jewish Temple--to its engulfment in the clashes of the Crusades and the short-lived Christianization of all of Jerusalem, to its modern acquisition of different and potent meanings for Muslim, Christian, and Jewish cultures.

Oleg Grabar's presentation combines what we know of the building with the views of past observers and with the broader historical, cultural, and aesthetic implications of the monument. Primarily it is as a work of art that the Dome of the Rock stands out from these pages, understood for the quality that allows it to transcend the constrictions of period and perhaps even those of faith and culture. Finally, Grabar grapples with the question this monumental work of art so eloquently poses: whether the pious requirements of a specific community can be reconciled with universal aesthetic values.

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